Vilnius memoryscape: razing and raising of monuments, collective memory and national identity.

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1. Introduction

This article attempts to analyse collective memory formation (the study of monuments, memory, and public space) through the lens of semiotic landscape. A theoretical focus on power relations in "monumental politics" (Czepczyński, 2008; Forest, Johnson & Till, 2004; Gordon, 2001; Kaufman, 2001), the concept of memoryscape (Clack, 2011) and Van Gennep's sociological concept of liminality (Van Gennep, A., 2004) and a methodological approach that "treats space as a discursive as well as physical formation" (Jaworski, A., Thurlow, C., 2010) are combined to examine the process of monument destruction, creation, and alteration in post-Soviet Vilnius.

Despite the complexity of Vilnius' past and its importance to a variety of cultures and ethnicities (Lithuanian, Polish, Jewish, Russian), strong attachment to the titular language and the metaphor of its displacement in Soviet times became key elements in the self-identification process. As Lithuania went through an intense period of nation building, the creation of a self-image as a nation of "innocent sufferers" (Snyder, T., 2002) and the reinterpretation of the past also became elements of the process of collective memory formation. Understanding collective memory formation as expressed through material manipulation of symbols (e.g. monuments, plaques) has been a focus for scholars in diverse disciplines since the sociologist Halbwachs (1992) introduced the concept in his landmark 1925 study *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. This article attempts to bring a semiotic landscape lens to this rich interdisciplinary area by connecting it to the existing LL research on monuments as materialised texts in public space (Shohamy, Waksman, 2010; 2009) and on memorization complex (Train, 2016) to illustrate that cultural landscapes represent not only relationship of power in societies, but also used as a tool of nation building and power legitimation.

The article establishes a fourfold structure of collective memory and identity formation via the manipulation of the city's memoryscape: 1. razing - monumental landscape cleansing; 2. raising - the return of memory: a) creation of national historical continuity

symbols; b) creation of new *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1996) and the memorization complex (Train, 2016); 3. polyphonic memorial narratives of empty spaces; 4. the memory "limbo helix" (Czepczyński, 2016).
The discussion is backed by a corpus of more than 460 photographs collected by the author during field trips to Vilnius (2015 – 2018).

2. Methodological Considerations

Before moving to the analysis of the transformation of the memoryscape and public memory in post-Soviet Vilnius, I would like to look at the main premises assumed by researchers whilst analysing power relations in monumental politics and memory studies. The concept of memoryscape is "a refinement of the conceptual maps of meaning promoted in the discipline of human geography" (Clack, 2011). Conceptual (or mental) maps, according to the urbanist Kevin Lynch, contribute to the particular visual quality of the urban landscape and play an important role in the process of power and memory representation. People understand their surroundings by forming and memorising mental maps with five elements: paths (e.g. streets and transport), edges (walls, buildings), districts, nodes (intersections, focal points) and landmarks (Lynch, 1960). The visual hierarchy in these maps, i.e. the presentation and placement of images, monuments and texts in various languages, allows researchers to analyse their socio-political positioning and aims.

Since any semiotic landscape, including memoryscape, is a central element of a wider concept of cultural landscape, I use these terms interchangeably adopting the following definition of cultural landscape: "Cultural landscape can be understood as both a visual and symbolic picture of cultural values. The values are being reflected in forms, but also in social behaviour and individual activities, undertaken within certain spatial frames. Landscape as value, language and meanings constructs social, cultural and political reality" (Czepczyński, M., 2008).
As cultural landscape is a product of multifaceted interrelations between different actors and factors, it is difficult to understand and explain its complexity using just one methodology. Czepczyński noted that "many researchers opt for a combination of supplementary attitudes and methods to synthesize the multifarious phenomenon of

cultural landscape" (Czepczyński, 2008: 30). I follow in their footsteps and use a mixture of theoretical concepts and analytical tools. Below are the main elements of the various theoretical frameworks employed in this study:

- Major cultural landscape transformations follow social revolutions (cultural geography) (Czepczyński, 2010).
- Cultural landscape, as compilation of forms, functions and meanings, always reflects the relationship of power and control from which it has emerged (cultural geography) (Czepczyński, 2010).
- Concept of rites of passage and liminality which accompany major social transformations in crisis times (social anthropology) (Van Gennep, 2004).
- During change and crisis, power holders employ monuments and memorials as vehicles to legitimise their claims on power and their visions of society's past, present and future (monumental politics in political science) (Forest, Johnson, 2011).
- Every cultural landscape is a discursive historical landscape, which reflects memories facilitated or enhanced by authorities (cultural geography, political science) (Czepczyński, 2008; Gordon, 2001).
- The methodological approach that "treats space as a discursive as well as physical space" (linguistic landscape) (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010: 12).

I will also be using a multimodal diachronic LL analysis in combination with synchronic analysis. Until recently, most Western LL investigations had been dominated by the synchronic approach to the analysis of public space, treating public signage and extra-linguistic signs as static (here and now). However, some researchers argue that in order to understand texts, signs and spatial discourse we need what Blommaert calls "deep ethnographic immersion". He writes: "On the one hand, to grasp the situated and momentary occurrence of a sign in this shop window, on this street, at this time; on the other hand, a need to situate these observations within much longer historical trajectory to account for the complexity of forces and meanings that dynamically come to bear on the instance of a sign and its interpretation" (Blommaert, 2013: 11).

Pavlenko, an expert on multilingualism in post-Soviet successor states, also sees LL studies as dynamic phenomena which should be examined in a diachronic manner. Linguistic Landscape 'is not a state but a diachronic process and the meaning of the present day's arrangements cannot be fully understood without considering those of the past' (Pavlenko, 2010: 133). It identifies the present-day conditions and memoryscapes as developmental paths through historical memories, practices and policies of authorities, therefore, "the interpretation of signs is diachronic in nature, intrinsically linked to the preceding signs in the same environment and to related signs elsewhere" (Pavlenko, Mullen, 2015: 115).

Following Blommaert and Pavlenko&Mullen, I believe that this approach is particularly useful in the analysis of post-Soviet space. As the LL of ex-Soviet republics has experienced massive transformations over the last 25 years, the interpretation of LL data there should be connected with the history of their cities and neighbourhoods. Building upon diachronic LL analysis of monuments and memorialisation, this article also employs the concept of the memorization complex, which "takes into account the shifting "regimes of historicity" that organise our understanding of "the past", "the present", and "the future", and allows them to be articulated in linguistic landscapes" (Train, 2016: 227).

Diachronic analysis of these processes reveals a narrative that illuminates the otherwise hidden long established historical conflicts related to the linguistic rights and identity issues today.

Combining these theoretical concepts and approaches I hope to illustrate that every cultural landscape is, in a sense, a discursive historical landscape, which reflects memories facilitated and manipulated by authorities, as a consequence of a representational system used as a nation building tool in an attempted power legalisation.

3. Lithuanian Social Revolution, Landscape Transformation and Memory Politics

The collapse of the communist regimes in Central Europe as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 is one of the major recent political transformations, which was followed by major landscape revolutions.

Lithuania was the first of the ex-Soviet republics to declare independence, and its Soviet cultural landscape was the first to become "a battlefield, where buildings and arrangements representing opposing ideas became enemies and rivals, as well as victims and winners" (Czepczyński, 2008: 109). Lithuania was the first in the East European block to face the problem of how to manage the inherited Soviet cultural landscape and the transformation of the political and national identity – a problem, common in every transitional society. The difficult questions of state and national identity building were of the utmost importance on the new government's agenda.

The transformation of the political and national identity triggers memory politics (Risse, 2010) in which the *lieux de mémoire (places of memory)* (Nora, 1996) and the "memorization complex" (Train, 2016) have particular importance. They are invariably connected with three major processes in public memory construction: forgetting the recent past, remembering the often mythologised historical past, and creating new memories to reflect the new public identity.

Lithuanian transformational processes started even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. A Decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR was issued declaring the Lithuanian language the main means of official communication (Decree on Language, 1989). After the declaration of independence, the new Lithuanian Constitution (1992), determined Lithuanian as the state language (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 1992, art.14) which then became the language of the public sphere (Republic of Lithuania Law on the State Language, 1995, IX-954: art.3-5). Thus, the first stage of forgetting the recent past in an attempt to create new identity was language repositioning. In the aftermath of independence, Russian became the "victim", as it was erased from all bilingual street signs. Pavlenko (2009) highlights five processes illustrating the change in the functions of languages in multilingual post-Soviet societies: language erasure, replacement, upgrading and downgrading, regulation and the appearance of transgressive signs. In Lithuania, the most prominent of these was erasure. For example,

spontaneous bottom-up erasure by individuals, where the offending Cyrillic[1] script was scratched from bilingual Lithuanian-Russian street signs soon after the Decree on Language was made.

Such acts were a reaction to the new language policy by individuals too impatient to wait for its slower official top-down implementation. However, it was a temporary measure. After the official re-establishment of independence in 1991, by the mid-1990s such "commercial and official signs, including road and street signs, were removed as being unnecessary and reminiscent of foreign occupation" (Suziedelis, 2011: 167) and replaced with official top-down monolingual Lithuanian signs. Many old streets also lost their Soviet names and received their historical names. For example, in Soviet days, the main street in the old town was named after the Soviet writer Gorky and would have been bilingual with the name of the street in Russian below its Lithuanian equivalent. Now it proudly bears its old historical name – *Pilies gatvė* (Castle Street).

However, the Russian Language was only one aspect of the Soviet past and represented a comparatively small part of the linguistic-semiotic landscape of Vilnius. The new government had a bigger task on its hands – to transform the cultural landscape of the capital. In the same way as language, cultural landscape operates as a representational system with signs, monuments and places creating a narrative which can be read and interpreted as geosymbols or icons. These symbols are a means of public declaration of which groups and histories the official sphere recognises as central to the state's identity and public memory (Czepczyński, 2010; Forest & Johnson, 2011).

As cultural landscapes always reflect the relationship of power and control from which they have emerged, the old Soviet geosymbols and icons had to be removed to free space for new forms, meanings and functions to represent the new power and legitimise it in collective memory. As Blommaert noted: "Space is very often a normative actor in sociolinguistic processes, and this is where history enters the picture" (2013: 30).

In the next section I will focus on the role and power of the state in cultural landscape transformations and how these are used as a tool for collective memory formation. In political science it is widely accepted that public memory is an interpretation of collective memory that reflects existing power structures. Political theorists interested in

[1] The Lithuanian language is written using the Roman alphabet.

nations and national identity creation maintain that political actors implore historical ethnic myths and symbols to create nations by shaping shared national memories using important symbolic events and ideas (Anderson, 1991; Forest & Johnson, 2011; Gehlbach, 2010; Gellner, 2008; Halbwachs, 1992; Tilly, 2006). Recent LL studies also emphasise historicity as "a critical tool that allows us to reframe linguistic landscapes in terms of complex regimes of past, present, and future constituted in material and (inter)textual spaces of language, identity and education" (Train, 2016: 227).

Following Czepczyński (2016), who used Arnold van Gennep's concept of rites of passage and liminality to analyse post-Socialist transformations in Poland, I will attempt to illustrate the above points in a Lithuanian context.

In 1909, the European comparative sociologist Arnold van Gennep defined in *Les rites de passage* (published in English in 1960 and republished in 2004) a structure for transformative ritual practices that he considered common in all cultures. They are used by societies to mark the passage or transition of an individual or a group from one social status or situation to another. Rites of passage resolve life-crises and provide a mechanism to deal with the tension experienced by both individuals and social groups during ambiguous occasions.

Arnold van Gennep's (2004) threefold structure of rites of passage includes:

1. **a pre-liminal phase** (separation), based on sorting out the 'good' from the 'bad'; defining and new coding begin an epistemological transformation, with cultural cleansing also a part of this phase.
2. **a liminal phase** (transition) characterised by a ménage of meanings and representations; the old is re-interpreted and de-contextualised, while the new is constructed, both physically and mentally.
3. **the final post-liminal phase** (reincorporation), when the division between 'old' and 'new' becomes insignificant and eventually disappears, the 'old' merging and becoming assimilated into contemporary social, cultural and economic life.

Post-Communist cultural landscape transformations are a dynamic continuous process where one reinterpretation is followed by another, making it resemble a palimpsest, when an older narrative is covered by a new one, or when a new narrative includes re-

interpreted elements of the old one, thus, representing "multi-layered historicity of the present" (Haggrén, Rainio-Niemi&Vauhkonen, 2013).

This is particularly relevant in the case of Vilnius, as the discourse of Soviet Lithuanian identity was closely linked to the nationalising drive of the inter-war republic (1918-1940) and to the Lithuanian nationalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, making the total elimination of the Soviet past a complex task.[2]

As was stated earlier, the cultural landscape transformations are used as a tool for collective memory formation, which in its turn "is best understood as a process rather than a static outcome" (Forest & Johnson, 2011: 271), as the following sections illustrate.

4. Collective Memory Formation

4.1. Erased Soviet past – Landscape of Modern Vilnius

As Pavlenko noted, "public signs, advertisements and billboards are usually the first form of contact we have with the language and script of the place" (2009: 247). On arrival in Lithuania, the airport greets visitors with the name of its capital, Vilnius. Exiting the *Oro Uostas* (airport), we can catch a bus to *Stotis* (railway station) and walk from there to explore the main street of the old city. The Lithuanian language is everywhere, and we don't even stop to think that this could be any different in the capital of Lithuania.

The linguistic landscape of the city is reinforced by its wider cultural landscape via monuments and buildings. The main Cathedral Square in the Old Town is a symbol of Lithuanian statehood: it is the site of the two most important national identity icons – firstly the statue to the city's founder, Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas with an iron wolf by his side and the Gedeminas tower. In the legend associated with the city's foundation, the Duke dreamt of an iron wolf standing on a hillside. He took it as sign to build a city there, and the wolf and tower became symbols of Lithuanian Vilnius (Fig.1 a), despite the historical fact that it has always been and still is a multi-ethnic city. As

[2] For a more detailed diachronic analysis of the cultural landscape of Vilnius see I. Moore's chapter Linguistic, ethnic and cultural tensions in the sociolinguistic landscape of Vilnius: a diachronic analysis (2018)

any other capital city, Vilnius is the "focal point of modern politics" and what we see today is the result of homogenising and nationalising efforts of the state (Weeks, 2015: 1) since the declaration of independence in 1989 to forget the Soviet past and to remember and memorialise the "ancient" past.

Figure 1.. (a) The statue to the Grand Duke Gedeminas; (b) Gedeminas Tower, 2018 (author's photographs).

This is a result of state-sponsored efforts to nationalise urban space to represent the nation and its nationalist rhetoric through re-creation of historical memories. These efforts, the strong attachment to the national language and the metaphor of its displacement in Soviet times became key elements in the self-identification and the strict policy of titular monolingualism.

As was mentioned above, public memory is an activity or process rather than an object or outcome. I will now attempt to analyse the process of its formation via cultural landscape transformation.

4.2. Razing of Soviet Monuments as Part of Memoryscape Cleansing in Vilnius

Following Van Ganepp's model, Lithuanian post-communist landscape transformations can be paralleled with liminal passages. The first pre-liminal phase included landscape "cleansings" and razing of the most vivid communist iconic landscape features. As pointed out by Cosgrove (1998), one of the main research methods (apart from textuality) used in cultural landscape investigations is iconography. Iconographical interpretation allows the reseracher to analyse the landscape as a means of seeing and representing the world. Through iconography, socio-political powers and nations impose and share visions and values of the world, creating common beliefs and memories. Iconography is a particular worldview point (Bonnemaison, 2005) and a tool for the contextualisation of the cultural landscape. It is always based on identification, description and interpretation of cultural icons with particular significance (Cosgrove, & Daniels, 2004). Icons are the most visible symbols of power that are "deeply connected with the ideas they represent and, at the same time, they share all the fortunes and misfortunes of their creators " (Czepczyński, 2010: 68). Therefore, it is not surprising that major power changes result in radical transformation of their symbolic representations, and that is why "landscape iconoclasm" (Czepczyński, 2010: 2) is usually the first stage in the establishment of any new power structure.

This can be clearly seen in contemporary post-socialist cultural landscape transformations in Vilnius. The razing (pre-liminal) phase began just after the declaration of independence in 1989. Landscape cleansing occurred directly after the process of separation from the USSR. Removal of communist codes and symbols, renaming, rededication and re-use of the symbolic heritage of the discredited Soviet regime was a swift process which cleared the ground for new icons, practices and memories.

Semiotic landscape cleansing goes beyond the erasure of Russian lingusitc signs discussed in section 3. It involves the destruction of Soviet monuments. As part of the memory politics, it was concerned with the removal of unwanted references and elimination of "wrong" meanings contained in Soviet political idols, emblems, logos and coats of arms. The removal of Lenin's statue in Vilnius was one of the first and most symbolically significant of many monumental razings. It had stood there since 1953. In August 1991 it was removed by crane to cheering crowds and became the most

known worldwide symbol of the fall of Soviet Power, as the footage was shown on CNN and reported in the international media.

Semiotic landscape cleansings generally ended by the late 1990s. Many of the hard to reinterpret codes and symbols, names and labels had been razed via physical destruction or removed from their prominent locations. Not all Soviet iconic symbols could have been easily destroyed or removed, as often they were imbedded in the general architectural canvas of the city. One such example is the lamp posts on the corners of the former Lenin square. As Figure 2 illustrates, each lamppost was topped with a laurel wreath, which contained hammer and sickle, a symbolic representation of the Soviet Union used on its flag and of communism in general. As the total destruction of the lamp posts would have been too costly, partial alteration was used as a solution, when the hammer and sickle emblem was removed from the finial.

Figure 2. Lamp post on the former Lenin Square in Vilnius with an empty laurel wreath, 2016 (author's photograph).

The destruction, removal and alterations of iconic Soviet heritage led to its elimination from social practices and memories. As Davolute said, the historical period "from 1940

to 1990 was declared legally inoperative, politically illegitimate, socially perverse, and culturally inauthentic" (2013: 4).

4.3. The Return of Memory – Raising of New Monuments and Reconstruction of National Identity

According to Turner (1975), transition is the most typical liminal phase. A central part of transition is based on the rejection of many aspects of the 'recent past'. Almost all revolutions begin with the idea of 'year zero': a new beginning founded upon the eradication of what had been before. However, this collective amnesia is an ultimately untenable position and is usually accompanied by the return either to conciliated versions of old pasts or to the creation of a new past in support of new identities and aspirations (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 1999). In Lithuania this stage could be labelled as "the return of memory" and consists of two intertwined proceses: 1. an interpretation of the capital city as symbol of national historical continuity; 2. a re-construction of national identity via creation of new *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1996) and the memorization complex (Train, 2016).

In terms of the cultural landscape in post-Soviet Vilnius, the power narratives of continuity during this stage are supported by the State through patronage over cultural heritage. The Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania registers and supervises all heritage monuments. It also approves the construction of new monuments and oversees all public debates concerning the fate of various items in its databases, which are constantly changed and updated due to socio-political changes.

When the Lithuanian parliament declared independence in March 1990, it did not proclaim a new republic, but quite deliberately reconstructed the interwar Lithuanian state and reinforced the Lithuanian national roots of the nation. The ancient origins of Lithuania in Vilnius were glorified, with references to key mythical sites, such as the Cathedral square and the tower of Gediminas, mentioned in section 4.1. These sites were considered by authorities as the main points of the new post-Soviet memoryscape which changed the focus of the mental maps of the city's inhabitants and aided the process of national reconstruction and identity building. One particularly important

aspect of monuments analysis is their distributional patterns: do they appear on the periphery, in the centre, near the entry points of the city, etc. Identification of distributional patterns of semiotic symbols that "link signs, practices and people" (Pavlenko, Mullen, 2015: 119) is an important analytic approach in LL studies. In central locations, they tend to follow official policies and reflect power and national and cultural dominance, whilst away from the main streets, they tend to reflect new informal developments in socio-political and cultural stratification, as illustrated in section 4.5.

In diachronic research, analysis of distributional patterns could be "constrained by uneven patterns of preservation", but "even limited comparisons constitute a productive means of understanding social stratification and orders of indexicality in the local communities" (Pavlenko, Mullen, 2015: 119-120). Using the concept of diachronicity and following Scollon and Scollon's principle of dialogicality (2003), we can expand such comparisons by additional sources, such as archival photographs, historical monographs, and memoirs of the city's inhabitants to reveal historical dialogues between the ruling powers of the city.

The statue to the city's founder (who ruled from 1316 to 1341) Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas with the iron wolf, erected in 1996 in the old historical centre of Vilnius was one of the first symbols of the new power narrative in post-Soviet Lithuania. It is an important example of the new memoryscape after the Soviet monuments razing phase. As was stated earlier, the raising of new monuments is part of the "return of memory" process and its first stage is an interpretation of the capital city as a symbol of national historical continuity. The choice of location for the new monument is not accidental. The Cathedral Square is a key location in the city's public life and has been used as a counter-dialogic stage by changing authorities over the centries. For example, archival photographs illustrate that a monument to Catherine II, was erected there in 1904 by the Imperial Russian authorities, as it was under her reign that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned in the 18th century, Russia acquiring the greater part. This "analytic arrangement of space" (Certeau, 1985) produced a landscape of power, which now could be analysed as a socio-cultural "artefact" of its time. It stood there until the city was occupied by the German army (between 1915 and 1918). These three years saw a great "landscape sweep" which accompanied the power change. The

withdrawing Russian army took with it the symbols of its dominance, including the monument of Catherine II. Although during German and later Polish and Soviet dominance the square remained empty due to various reasons, it is apparent from the analysis of archival photographs that the newer part of the city (established in the early 20th century) was "re-spatialisaed" by each power. Hegemonisation is strongly connected to the process of spatialisation, when space is equivalent to representation of power and the production of ideological closure (Laclau, 1990), particularly in the context of temporal dislocation.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and new linguistic and cultural policies presented the new Lithuanian government with the opportunity to reclaim the square as the historical symbol of national rebirth. Although the debates about the architectural merits of the monument to Gedeminas still continue today, the monument remains the most important icon not only of the newly independent Lithuania, but also of its ancient and pre-Soviet past, and of the united front of the neighbouring ex-Soviet republics during the collapse of the Soviet Union. The authors of the monument are the American Lithuanian refugee sculptor V. Kašuba and by then the ex-Soviet Lithuanian sculptor M. Šnipas. The bronze used for the monument was confiscated from smugglers by Lithuanian border guards. The marble for the pedestal was a gift from the Ukrainian government, and the sculpture itself was cast free of charge in Estonia.

The process of interpretation of the capital city as a symbol of national historical continuity is not new in the socio-cultural discourse of Vilnius. Its ethnically, culturally, and politically complex history made it a key element in national-cultural mythology for Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, and Russians.[3] The post-Soviet quest to re-establish the Lithuanian origins of the city could be closely linked to the efforts of the government of the inter-war Lithuanian Republic. In 1939 the Vilnius campaign was an important part of the memory building and nationalising processes. Memory politics based on the cult of medieval dukes and the Middle Ages became mainstream in the national discourse. These were useful in proving that Lithuania was an "historical" nation and valuable in cultural self-representation then (Davoliūtė, 2013; Weeks, 2015) and resurfaced as a valuable multimodal semiotic tool of memorysape creation during the new monuments

[3] For a more detailed analysis of the history of Vilnius and its cultural heritage see T. Weeks *Vilnius between Nations* (2015).

raising phase in the newly independent country "to make the past present for the future" in public space" (Train, 2016: 223).

The re-construction of the Grand Dukes' Palace is another example of this process in post-Soviet Vilnius. It can be considered as part of the search for the restoration of "historical truth" that has come to characterise many post-Soviet countries.

The idea to rebuild this palace (historically known as the Lower Castle Palace) was first voiced in 1987, during an intense period of national reawakening and renewed public interest in the nation's cultural heritage. Extensive historical, archaeological and architectural studies of the former palace soon followed. In an effort to secure public support, the Lower Castle Palace, former residence of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes, was renamed the Rulers' Palace, or the Palace of the Grand Dukes. A competition for its reconstruction design provoked considerable debate over the appropriateness of the rebuilding effort. This was the broadest discussion connected with the historical heritage re-construction in the Lithuanian media. The remains of the original Palace were destroyed by the Russian Imperial Government in 1801 and its symbolic importance in modern Vilnius was juxstoposed to the lack of academic information about its exterior and interior design, artificiality, the high cost of re-construction and the threat posed by new construction to existing authentic historic buildings (many in need of restoration) (Drėmaitė, 2017).

However, "the most influential political parties at the time decided to support the re-construction" (Žilinskaite, 2008: 93). The Lithuanian Parliament passed a law on the reconstruction and purpose of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes' Palace in 2000 to be completed by 2009, in time for the millennial celebration of the first mention of Lithuania in historic chronicles in 1009. The reconstruction started in 2002, was partially opened to the public in 2013 and was fully completed in July 2018. Wide media coverage, heated public discussions and considerable financial investment into its re-construction firmly embedded the Palace into the present and future public memoryscape of the city. It contributed to the creation of a memorization complex of "historical truth" focused on the Lithuanian roots of Vilnius and ignoring its multi-ethnic past and present.

This example is an illustration of how authorities select traces of the past contained in the cultural landscape and use the memories and histories they evoke to create a new interpretative memory narrative in an effort to unite the nation and its new identity within the common space of belief. Such interpretations are always politically conditioned, as they "anchor national regional and local traditions of patriotism and commemoration, particularly during periods of political change" (Czepczyński, 2010: 69).

The processes of historical continuity and national identity construction are further consolidated by cultural codes replacement, when spaces cleared by landscape cleansing are filled with monuments to nationally significant cultural and political figures and events. Figure 3 shows one such replacement in Vilnius. The statue of the Soviet Army general Chernyakhovsky, who led the liberation of Vilnius from the Nazis, was dismantled in 1992 and after lengthy negotiations was reinstated in Voronezh (the town in southwestern Russia he defended in 1942). The Chernyakvosky Square was renamed *Savivaldybės aikštė* (Municipality Square), but it remained empty until 2009, when a monument to the 19th century Lithuanian "awakening movement" national hero, writer, publicist, composer, doctor and author of the Lithuanian anthem, Vincas Kudirka, was erected there. The unveiling of the statue in 2009 coincided with the festivities marking the 1000th anniversary of the first mention of Lithuania in official historic chronicles and, therefore, filled the gap in the delayed plan to open the Grand Dukes Palace that year.

Figure 3. Statue of Dr.Kudirka, 2016 (author's photograph).

As we can see, the transformation tactic of the opening spaces or "spatial mapping" (Pavlenko, Mullen, 2015:) in the cultural landscape is grounded on the reflective or mimetic approach of representation (Hall, 2002), which is based on the assumption that meaning remains in the monuments, places and buildings, thus, continuing the historical counter-dialogue of past and present powers and creating the new memoryscape. That is why the removal of monuments thought to be mimetic of the old regime and identity is usually followed by the erection of new monuments and buildings, which signify new meanings and help to construct new memories and identities. They aim to renegotiate historical events and people and are usually activated by local governments and political parties (Foote, Tóth, Arvay, 2000).

The past has a vital role in identity and memory formation and the question of "what to remember and how to forget" (Czepczyński, 2010: 68) is central in memory practices. However, it would not be accurate to assume that forgetting is simply sweeping away

all memories of the previous regime along with its monumental icons. The process of "how to forget" is closely connected with a careful selection of certain aspects of the recent, as well as historical, past that should not be forgotten and form the basis of new memory. In the next subsection I will attempt to analyse what elements of the Soviet past were not forgotten, but emphasised and re-interpreted in order to create new *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1996) or "visible sites of memorization" (Train, 2016: 225).

4.4. New *lieux de mémoire and* Memorization Complex

As was stated in Section 1, the creation of a self-image as a nation of "innocent sufferers" who were displaced by the Soviet regime became the key tool in the memory practices of the new Lithuanian political elite.

Along with historical building reconstruction and the creation of monuments to historical national heroes, a large number of monuments erected in post-Soviet Vilnius were focussed on commemorating the deportations and other atrocities committed during the Nazi and early Soviet periods. Such "memorization" commits to public memory "specific linguistic, political and educational discourses, ideologies, practices and policies designed to "make the past present for the future" in public space" (Train, 2016: 226).

In our opinion, Train's "memorization complex" is an integral part of the return of memory process through discourse of displacement. It had a deep political, social and cultural impact. It was reinforced and channelled into performative rituals of personal transformation through mass rallies and ceremonies of commemoration, when the archetypal figure of the martyr offers a powerful vehicle for remembering the dead, and a potent tool for making and remaking identity, and especially for cultivating national myths (Davoliūtė, 2013). The discourse of martyrdom is one of the modes of remembering in Soviet and post-Soviet space. In Lithuania, it manifested itself in the mass rites of reburial or "politics of dead bodies" (Verdery, 1999: 40) and the creation of commemorative sites to the victims of the Soviet regime, deportees of the 1940-50s, and those who lost their lives in January 1991 as a result of Soviet military actions in the aftermath of the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. The

authorities or "mnemonic actors" (Pettai, 2016: 248) invested heavily in specific icons and commemorative sites with deeply felt "victims of the Soviet regime" meaning. Pierre Nora described such sites as *lieux de mémoire* and noted their historical significance in terms of cognitive and affective dimensions (Nora, 1996).

Figure 4 below shows the lower part of the ex-NKVD/KGB building carved with the names of anti-Soviet resistance fighters who were executed there during the Stalinist Soviet regime.

Figure 4. The names of anti-Soviet resistance fighters on the façade of the ex-KGB building, 2016 (author's photograph).

A memorial in front of this building commemorates all Lithuanian victims of the Soviet regime. The stones were brought from different regions of Lithuania to include all Lithuanians into this memory narrative (Fig. 5). The inscription in Lithuanian at the bottom of the monument (Fig.5 a) says: "*Sovietinės Okupacijos Aukoms Atminti*" (In Memory of the Victims of Soviet Occupation). Across the road, in the corner of the former Lenin Square, there is a small temporary memorial stone with a dedication "*To Those Who Gave Up Their Lives to Motherland*" (Fig.5 b). Since the removal of Lenin's statue, this square once again bears its historical name – *Lukiškių Aikšte* (Lukiskiu Square). Discussions on its fate continued until last year when reconstruction works

were finally started, bringing into fruition the results of a long competition for the square's purpose and design which is discussed in the next section.

Figure 5. (a) A monument in front of the ex-NKVD/KGB building, 2016; (b) A memorial stone in Lukiskiu Square, 2016 (author's photographs)

As Davoliūtė writes, this narrative helped to maintain a level of social cohesion and stability through difficult years of political and economic transition, giving new contours to the past and drew the minority of Lithuanians who had actually been the victims of Gulag into the same category as the majority of Lithuanians who had not, but experienced other forms of Sovietisation. Even Lithuanians who emigrated to the West were identified as deportees (2013). Such "memorization" of certain events is a common feature of linguistic landscapes around the world, as it aids public learning to forget and remember past histories in "the interest of supposed national and cultural unity shared by "all"" (Train, 2016: 226).

It helped with the new identity building, but also played into the hands of authorities, many members of which were Soviet apparatchiks and accommodated themselves to the Soviet regime. Therefore, it helped the cohesion of the liberation movement through identification of the majority of Lithuanians with trauma of displacement and victimhood.

However, the "returned" memories are highly selective and there is a strong element of public amnesia, as illustrated by the example of the Museum of Genocide Victims which was open in the former KGB building in 1992. Until recently this museum in the capital of a country with the highest proportion in Europe of Holocaust genocide of its Jewish population did not mention the word *Holocaust* or the name of the nearby infamous mass-killing site, where 100,000 civilians were murdered. The sign outside informs visitors that between 1940 and 1991 this building housed the representative institutions of the NKVD and later KGB, and the exhibits inside relate almost exclusively to the period of oppression and the so-called genocide of the Lithuanian people by the Communist regime. The information that between 1941 and 1944 the building was controlled by the Gestapo, whose role in the systematic murder of the vast majority of the city's Jewish population with the willing participation of many ethnic Lithuanian collaborators is strangely overlooked. Such selective memorization "highlights the socially-situated, constructed and contested networks of public and collective remembering and forgetting" (Train, 2016: 226).

Following protests from many parts of the world in the summer of 2010, a small exhibit on the Holocaust was opened in one of the basement cells of the museum in October 2011 (still without any mention of local collaborators). As international pressure mounted, the museum was finally renamed Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights in May 2018.

These examples illustrate that the new authorities' emphasis was on investing in specific symbols and sites with deep feelings of national tragedy. Their memory politics did not simply evoke the past, but altered it, "nursed, trained and created" it (Czepczyński, 2010: 69). At the same time, it is a dynamic and constantly changing process. Landscapes in transition are often characterised by ambiguity, as they peel off old power narrative layers or change the recently created narratives as a reaction to shifting priorities or local and international public campaigns, thus, creating polyphonic memorial narratives and leaving empty spaces, which will be analysed in the next section.

4.5. Polyphonic Memorial Narratives of Empty Spaces

The transitional (liminal) phase can last a long time and have various expressions, including deviations from the official narrative. The second post-communist transitional sub-phase of cultural landscape transformation was characterised by uncertainty and hesitations, empty spaces and unstable and ambiguous codes, and was focused on a second degree of icons, which often lost their political connotations, therefore, they went against the official memorial narrative. Many old icons without clear political connotations, as well as empty spaces left after the initial landscape cleansing or temporary icons placed there, created an "in-between" unstable meanings and unbalanced representations creating a polyphony of narratives (Czepczyński, 2008; Gromilova, 2014; Turner, 1975).

As was mentioned in section 4.3, distributional patterns of semiotic symbols is an important analytic approach in LL studies. In central locations, they usually follow official policies and reflect national and cultural dominance, and away from the main streets, they tend to reflect new informal and ambiguous developments in socio-political and cultural stratification. This spatial mapping reveals "cross-urban and cross-locational differences" (Pavlenko, Mullen, 2015: 121) between official and non-official narratives in cultural landscapes. One such example of ambiguity and uncertainty during historic and modern transitional times is Lukiskiu Square. Although it is located in the new centre of Vilnius (built in the 19th century), it is geographically comparatively distant from the old centre of Vilnius and its Cathedral Square, which was used as the main arena for the official historical memory narrative.

During its history Lukiskiu square has been used variously as a marketplace and also as a venue for public executions following the 1863 uprising against the Czarist authorities. A stone commemorating those who died was laid there in the 1920's by the Polish authorities who, at the time, were in charge of the city. The square was renamed after the Polish statesman Pilsudsky. It was reconstructed and renamed Lenin Square between 1949 - 52, and the largest statue of Lenin in the Lithuanian SSR was erected in the middle in 1953. After the restoration of independence it was removed (along with the Polish commemorative stone, which was replaced by another commemorative stone mentioned in section 4.4. (Fig.5 b) and plans for a Freedom monument were announced by the new Parliament. The seemingly small detail of the stone's removal is yet another example of selective memory formation, where the traces of Polish and Soviet history

are obliterated from public memory. Despite the fact that the majority of political and civic communities as well as society at large welcomed this highly symbolic gesture, the future developments of the square as a public space were slow and largely ineffective. While the monument to Duke Gedeminas was swiftly erected in the historical heart of the city, a number of temporary symbols replaced Lenin's statue, such as a sand sculpture of John Lennon to celebrate the Beatles' 50th anniversary in 2012 (it ironically and wittily played with the similarity in the names of Lenin and Lennon) and more recently the Flag of the Duchy of Lithuania (Fig. 6).

Figure 6. Lukiskiu Square with the flag of the Duchy of Lithuania replacing Lenin's statue, 2016 (author's photograph).

As one Lithuanian journalist wrote, the square remained empty for 24 years as various competitions for a new monument failed to produce a winner. Some designs were accused of plagiarism, others were lacking artistic value or were too costly. The flag was placed in the square in 2013 as a temporary work of art, but remained there for five years (Žemaitis, 2013) until the square was closed for reconstruction works in summer 2018. A memorial to Lithuanian partisans (the Forest Brothers) is planned for the square. It will resemble a forest with guerrilla bunkers, and the square itself will be turned into recreational space with extended green spaces, new benches and a fountain.

The author of the winning project maintains that the tradition of sculpture in art is obsolete and his alternative design will make the square a free and open space in the city (Ufartas, 2017).

Many other squares where Soviet monuments were removed remain empty today. A number of factors contributed to the precipitous redevelopment of the urban tissue in Vilnius and elsewhere, including their peripheral location and uneven and somewhat dramatic economic developments during the first post-Soviet decade, plus the chronic lack of municipal funds. In some cases, "public spaces emptied of their compromised symbolic content hardly look public at all: they often remain abandoned, badly neglected, and devastated sites that perform no social function and are cautiously avoided by most city dwellers, excepting groups of teenagers, graffiti "artists," and members of local gangs apt to leave their own marks on these spaces" (Samalavičius, 2016).

In fact, the phenomenon of empty spaces, when the original grand political symbolic ideas came against current problems and financial shortages, was picked up by the city's inhabitants, who became disillusioned with empty promises of successive rival political parties. In the early 2000's a number of graffiti appeared around Vilnius, emphasising the unfulfilled promises and passivity of the authorities and creating alternative dialogic people's narrative (Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Graffiti on an abandoned and neglected building in central Vilnius, 2018 (author's photograph).

They are initiated by different mnemonic actors, such as newly elected governments and multi-ethnic inhabitants of the city. It is interesting to note, that languages used in such locations often deviate from the official state language (as in the above example). This results in a certain level of spatial disarray and anarchy even in the most controlled landscape transformations. As the new powers have to cope with constantly changing regulations resulting from competing political forces and economic pressures, the disillusioned voices of the city's inhabitants become more prominent on the walls of Vilnius. They address "the partial failure of state and municipal policies to deal with the urban legacy of the Soviet era" and are reproachful visual manifestations arguing for an urgent need of insightful urban design in order to breathe new life into the 'frozen' transitional period (Graham, B., 1998; Samalavičius, A., 2016b; Skozylas, Ł., 2014).

Another feature of social deconstruction, which adds to the polyphony and ambiguity of post-Socialist cultural landscapes, is incorporation. It is a process of recycling old icons and symbols, using them in new contexts as tools of commercial gain, when they become part of popular cultural trends (e.g. socialist kitsch trend in Germany and Poland) (Czepczyński, 2008). Although Lithuania banned the use of Soviet and Nazi symbols (Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Lithuania, Art.188, 2008), eighty six Soviet monuments and numerous other items formerly adorning streets and buildings in Soviet Lithuania found their way to Grūtas Park (or Stalin's World, as it is labelled by visitors). The park was established in 2001 and is privately owned by a former Communist functionary "who seems to have had an eye for a clever, long-term business plan" (Samalavičius, 2016) and helped the authorities to resolve the dilemma of what to do with the left-over Soviet heritage removed during the "monumental sweep" of the early days of independence (Fig. 8).

Figure 8. Removed Communist idols in Grutas Park, 2016, (author's photographs).

Similar communist theme parks sprang all over Eastern Europe, forming a part of the phenomenon of so called "dark tourism". De-pedestalised and de-sacralised old icons became merely tourist attractions, "often funny, sometimes funky and rarely reflective" (Czepczyński, 2010: 7). The creation of the park caused controversial reactions. Some saw it as tasteless and disrespectful to the victims of Soviet regime, others as an educational memorization site which serves as a reminder of Lithuania's Soviet past. In my opinion, its functions differ from the official *lieux de mémoire*, which focus on memorization of certain elements of the past as discussed in section 4.4. Removing the communist idols from pedestals and changing their location and status, substantially alters the ideological content of the monuments. The mock watch towers, barbed wire around the perimeter of the park and look alike actors impersonating Lenin and Stalin toy with controversy and pose a question mark over the park's memorization and educational value.

These examples illustrate that cultural memory is a complex phenomenon. It is rarely a homogenous unitary symbolic narrative, it has a mosaic, polyphonic heterogeneous structure, elements of which emerge in spaces with different speeds, at different times

via different media, in different languages (this itself could be a topic of a separate investigation) and with different intentions.

5. The memory "limbo helix" or Recursive Memories

According to Van Gennep, the liminal transitional phase is usually followed by the final post-liminal phase, when the division between 'old' and 'new' becomes insignificant and gradually disappears (van Gennep, 2004). However, twenty seven years after the collpase of the Soviet Union, the Lithuanian post-communist memory landscape seems to be repeating itself, revolving around the "old" and new *lieux de mémoire.* Although Lithuania has had the same president since 2009 (Dalya Grybauskaitė), the multiparty government system exploits memory politics as a tool during the Parliamentory elections every four years. It seems that the landscape and memory policy transformation returns to separation every time there is a change of government, keeping the society in what Czepczyński calls "memory limbo helix" (2016: 71), i.e. memory and memory politics are used again and again to represent the recent past, and become important political resources employed by successive ruling parties. Obsessive symbols and icons focused on national unity and martyrdom, accompanied by the second wave of landscape cleansing, seem to be essential for successful political battles, since the visible signs embedded in the city's landscape narrative speak to everybody conveying power and hope.

"The Road of Freedom" monument erected in Vilnius in 2010 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the the restoration of the Lithuanian Republic is one such example (Fig. 9). As the official Vilnius Tourism website states it "invites all residents of the country and patriots of Lithuania to continue along the path of freedom and solidarity" (The Road of Freedom, 2010).

Figure 9. Road of Freedom monument is symbolic of the live chain of people who, joined hands and connected the three Baltic States 27 years ago. The chain stretched over 600 kilometres and became an expression of unprecedented solidarity; 2018 (author's photograph).

It is the first monument in the Baltic states to commemorate the recent past. It gloryfies the solidarity of the Baltic states during their struggle for independence in 1989 – 1991. The idea for the project "evolved from a reflection of contemporary apathy, pessimism and confrontation" (ibid) of the country's inhabitants tired of authorities' promises to improve things. The graffiti mentioned in Section 4.5 were an anonymous public proclamation of "the lame economic and urban policy of the recent decades, which ignored public interests and served the needs of developers and financial investors" (Samalavičius, 2016). The monument was an attempt by the authorities to divert the public's attention away from the present financial difficulties in a gesture of commemorative activism. People could contribute to the Project and get a brick with their name stamped on it.

Another example of this repeated memorization is the construction in 2017 of the memorial anti-tank barricades near the Parliament building. A preserved section of the original concrete blocks forming the barricades in 1991 to protect the Parliament had

been put back on display (Fig. 10). The “Freedom to Lithuania” is cleary visible on the block, next to it a small plaque with names of fourteen Lithuanian civilians who lost their lives in 1991.

Figure 10. The anti-tank barricades became a symbol of national heroism durig the anti-Soviet events of January 1991; 2017 (author’s photograph).

Yet another recent emphasis on creating new anti-Soviet memorials seems to be repeating the earlier stage of new identity creation and goes even further, back to landscape cleansing of the first post-independence days. Power battles can take unexpected forms. Figure 11 illustrates an interesting case were landscape cleansing returns to symbolic associations with Soviet times contained in linguistic tokens. However, if in the 1990’s this was focused on the Russian language erasure, now it is not the language itself, but the action of rebranding sausages and partially erasing a Russian abbreviation referring to Soviet Lithuania on manhole covers (after more than 20 years of independence) creates a discursive practice that can shift or reaffirm the relationship of power (Jones, 2010).

Figure 11. (a) "*Tarybinis*" (Soviet) sausages, 2013; (b) manhole covers near the Parliament building, one with the abbreviated SSR (CCP) 2013, one with the same abbreviation erased, both circled in red; 2016 (author's photographs).

Figure 11 (a) depicts the brand name "Tarybinis" (Soviet) which was created in 1988 and existed happily until 2013. Its "Soviet" sausages made by the Samsonas company were among the most popular and yielded good profits. However, in the wake of the worsening relationship between Russia and Ukraine in January 2013 and the growing support in Lithuania for the Ukranian independence movement, the company decided to scrap the name of the brand. Some observers consider that there must definitely be a connection between the rebranding and the visit at the time of the Ukrainian Culture minister in Lithuania. The company's president explained that the decision was prompted by the political situation. He said: "The current geopolitical situation obliges us as dutiful citizens to reject the word "Soviet" (Волкова, 2013). Figure 11 (b) illustrates a partial deletion of the abbreviation in Russian - LSSR deleting SSR and leaving Lit (for Lithuanian) on manhole covers in front of the Seimas building in May 2013. In both cases the word Soviet remained in public spaces in the Lithuanian and Russian languages as a part of the final incorporation phase. However, cultural landscapes always represent social, economic, political and cultural trends that can lead to a re-evaluation of landscape elements. Therefore, liminal transition which usually is

ended by the final incorporation, can be reversed to the earlier phases of transformations and bring to the surface historical and ethnic tensions.

This reversal is also visible in the second wave of landscape cleansing, when the authorities' attention was turned to old Soviet monuments without glaring ideological connotations. The fate of sculptures on the Green Bridge (Chernaykhovsky Bridge in Soviet days) is a recent example of a "deep peel" process characteristic of many post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe (Czepczyński, 2016: 71). The bridge was built by Soviet engineers in 1952 to replace the one destroyed by the Nazis. The four sculptural groups on its corners depicting collective farmers, workers, soldiers, and school youngsters were created by famous Lithuanian sculptors and not considered to be politically significant. Since 1997, the statues have been listed as objects of Lithuania's cultural heritage by the Department of Cultural Heritage. However, in early 2010 the city's new moderate nationalist mayor decided to remove them under the pretext of restoration. Despite heated public debates between the city's inhabitants, historians, cultural organisations and the representatives of the Russian minority, the sculptures were removed in 2016. The empty bridge similar to empty squares became a symbol of limbo helix (Fig. 12).

Figure 12. The empty Green Bridge in Vilnius; 2016 (author's photograph).

As one local resident stated: "the statues are a part of our heritage, even if it is from the Soviet era. Those who shout that it is necessary to demolish and forget everything Soviet do not give a thought to the fact that this way of thinking would erase a huge chunk of Lithuania's history" (Lithuania's Cunning Approach to Removing the Soviet Past, 2015). These multiple interpretations and re-interpretations of the cultural landscape reflect current power games where the anti-communist argument still holds sway and is used as the main tool in memory politics. As Train writes: "Public memory is not a once-told tale. Rather, it is memorized and co-memorized by recursive tellings by tellers in the same and different spaces, places, and times" (2016: 226-227).

Many questions from the distant and recent past remain unanswered or are chosen to be "forgotten", such as the complex ethnic structure of Lithuania and its history, complicity of Lithuanians in the Holocaust and the experiences of other ethnic groups. As Proust once said: "Reality takes shape only in memory" (1954: 184), memory is always related to current political tensions, fears, hopes and expectations.

6. Conclusions

The article offers an attempt to illustrate that political control over memories is a vital tool in cultural memoryscape transformations which are visible in urban linguistic landscapes. It is systematised, institutionalised and facilitated by numerous mnemonic actors, to establish, explain, interpret and disseminate preferred memory via the construction of new landscapes, which are connected to the past and the future. On the one hand, we were able to establish the surface picture of language repositioning and changes in language practices, on the other, extra-linguistic semiotic diachronic analysis enabled us to investigate how written languages interact with the physical features of the cityscape to construct new memory landscapes. The article illustrated that diachronicity and layered historicity are important elements of LL analysis in post-Soviet space and are instrumental in the construction of new memoryscapes.

This analytical approach enabled us to illustrate that the seemingly linear process of monument destruction and replacement in memoryscape transformations, proved to be a complex circular multilayered and multistaged process, where old memories are being

contested, new memories and heritages being created, history is being corrected and repeated to meet the expectations and goals of the ruling party. The article identified a four-fold structure of this construction: monument razing, as the instrument of forgetting; monument raising in the construction of new memories; polyphonic memorial narratives of empty spaces, and the memory "limbo helix" or recursive memories.

The memory whirl pulls people, places, memories and narratives inside this long-term limbo of liminality. This approach to collective memory and identity, obstructs social reflection on the experience of other ethnic groups and leaves blank spots in the memory of Soviet history, where many Lithuanians "were not the victims, but the agents of history" (Davoliūte, 2013).

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